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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AGRICULTURAL MARKETING SERVICE LIVESTOCK AND SEED DIVISION

PAMPHLET NO. 2

March 1990

DRAFT March 12, 1992



5/19/92

BUYING



fresh or frozen

red

MEATS



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INTRODUCTION

When you walk into supermarkets and meat stores to buy meat, you have in mind certain requirements. Among these is that the product must be the cut you want, that it is fresh, wholesome, affordable, and available. Usually, you purchase retail cuts because the product is easy to take home, store, and cook--and economical

You may have adequate freezer storage space and believe that you can save money by buying carcasses, sides, or quarters, and cutting them up yourself. This latter method of buying is not popular as it once was because meat is now divided into smaller wholesale and retail cuts at the packer level -- then boxed and shipped to supermarkets and meat stores. This reduces the availability of carcasses, sides, and quarters for use in the home.

Most of this pamphlet is concerned with buying retail cuts of beef, veal, lamb, and pork. A section is devoted to chilled and frozen storage, and a section deals with purchases of carcasses and quarters. If you decide to cut your own meat, this last section should be very useful. The tables present data from meat cuts, i.e., retail value, yields, and storage times and temperatures.

10 POINTERS FOR BUYING MEAT

Appearance...wholesomeness...
quality... amount to buy...
prices... convenience...
service...getting your money's
worth...identifying
cuts...learning meat grades...
knowing your dealer...these
are all factors you should
take into account when buying
meat.

You should also consider the amount of meat you can store, the amount your family can use within a reasonable time, and the kinds of cuts and quality your family prefers. If you plan to cut up your own meat, you should be aware of the kinds and quantity of the various cuts that you get from a carcass or wholesale cut. (The tables included should help you with this.)

CHECK MEAT'S APPEARANCE.

When you walk up to a meat counter, look the product over thoroughly. Fresh or frozen, it is a good practice to make sure that the product is wholesome and free from foreign colors, odors, or materials. Product appearance is an important quality guide, especially if the grade or packer's brand does not appear on the meat.

Be sure not to consider fat in appearance evaluation. This is because the color of fat varies with breed, age, and how the animal is fed. Thus, fat color is not a quality indicator.

VALUE WHOLESOMENESS.

All meat is inspected for wholesomeness by either State or Federal inspectors of the Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS), and you can rest assured that meat is clean, wholesome, unadulterated, and truthfully labeled. Some State governments have worked with FSIS to establish State programs of meat inspection that are equal to FSIS standards.

Meat inspectors use stamps with edible coloring. Take care not to confuse the round Federal inspection marks with the shield shaped quality grade marks used by meat graders. Two of the round stamps used by inspection officials are exhibited below:



The FSIS
legend,
"INSP'D&P'S'D"
stamp is put on
major cuts of
the carcass.
You may not see
it on the roast
or steak you

buy.

U.S.
INSPECTED
AND PASSED BY
DEPARTMENT OF
AGRICULTURE
EST. 38

The "Inspection and Passed" symbol, illustrated to the left, is stamped on every prepackaged Federally

inspected processed meat product.

BUY USDA QUALITY GRADED MEAT.

After the inspection for wholesomeness by meat inspectors, carcasses may be graded by meat graders. USDA grades are a reliable guide to meat quality--its tenderness, juiciness, and flavor. They're applied by experienced and trained USDA graders using uniform Federal standards of quality. That is why you can be sure that a USDA Choice "rib eye" is the same quality no matter where you buy it. USDA has quality grades for beef, calf, veal, lamb, yearling mutton, and mutton. Pork is seldom graded although official USDA grades exist.

Cuts of meat, such as steaks, ribs, and loins may be labeled as to USDA grade, so you need to know what grade to buy and how to identify the correct grade. Just remember--you don't have to become an expert on meat quality to identify the grade. Put simply--if you want a USDA Choice loin, steaks, etc., look in the meat counter until you find the loin you want. It will be stamped with the USDA Choice

stamp. If the meat is in a box or package officially printed with USDA Choice, select this item, or--choose meat from sections of the meat counter that are marked to designate the U.S. grade.

Some meat counters may contain meat that isn't graded by U.S. Graders. Instead, it may have been commercially labeled with a company's private brand. Several companies have private brand labels used to label meat quality -- thus you will need to become familiar with the quality grading system of each processor to be effective in buying meat. Since this is confusing, you can appreciate USDA's non-biased grading You can rest assured system. that USDA grades are easy to select and will consistently give you the quality desired.

Determine the Amount to Buy.

Buying enough for your needs depends on available storage space and how you will use the meat. Cost will definitely influence the amount you buy-so will family size and the types and quantities of meat they prefer.

Buy only the amount of meat that you can safely keep in the refrigerator if sufficient home freezer space is not available. Consult Table 5 to determine the times and temperatures to store the meat.

To estimate the number of 3ounce servings of boneless cooked meat to expect from a pound of each cut of meat, see Table 4. For example, one pound of fresh pork as purchased should yield 3.5 3-ounce servings. See the next example:

Table 4 shows that there are 4 3-ounce cooked lean servings per pound of raw ground beef. That's enough to give 4 people a large hamburger. So, you can calculate how much you need to buy to serve x number of meals x number of days.

Some consumers buy their favorite cuts of meat in quantity during sales, then freeze the meat for future needs. This works well if freezer space is available.

Shop and Compare Prices.

The cost of meat is not necessarily a good guide to quality, tenderness, or nutritive value of meat. Instead, popularity of a cut, season of the year, amount of handling or processing, and the type of store--all influence price.

Whether or not you save money with a cut of meat depends on the amount of cooked lean meat it provides and its price per pound. For example, round steak and beef rib roast may cost the same per pound, but the round steak will provide 2 to 3 ounces more cooked lean meat per pound purchased.

Equal-size servings of cooked lean from different cuts provide similar food value. Generally, cooked lean from pot roast is as nutritious as that from the most expensive steak or chop. Thus, you can find good buys in food value by comparing the cost of purchased amounts that will provide equal amounts of cooked lean. Or, compare the cost of amounts needed for a family meal.

In local newspapers, certain meat cuts are occasionally featured as specials. Take advantage of these specials and enjoy lower priced meals or stock up for the future.

Use Conveniences and Services.

Buying meat has become more convenient since the advent of vacuum-packaging, display of a variety of meat cuts in large refrigerated transparent bins, and assistance available to expedite purchases. Take advantage of services offered in the meat department. meat personnel will gladly help you solve any problems with the meat availability, quality, etc. You may buy larger cuts that you can cut up at home, or you may have the meat cut up while you wait. Usually, you can get advice on how much to buy for use or storage.

Get Your Money's Worth.

Getting your money's worth is a combination of many factors, some being: quality-USDA
graded meat preferred where possible; quantity--enough to
serve the purpose--use tables

and information; <u>sales</u> and <u>specials</u>--Become familiar with your newspaper food sections and the various items on sale.

- Be sure you need the items offered.
- Compare several advertisements for the items you wish to buy.
- Then check the meat items in the stores to insure that the quality is that needed.
- If you have adequate freezer space, consider taking advantage of the price by buying more beef than you need immediately.
- Choose stores that you can rely on for quality products.

Learn Grades of Meat.

You need not be a meat expert to identify a quality product. Put simply--if you want USDA Choice loins, steaks, etc., look in the meat counter until you find the loin steaks, etc., labeled with the USDA Choice stamp. If the meat is in a box or package printed with USDA Choice, choose this item, or choose meat from sections of the meat counter that are marked to sesignate the U.S. grade. On the other hand, learning the grades will help you make wise meat purchases. For example, each USDA quality grade is a measure of a distinct level of quality. There are eight quality grades for beef (listed in descending order): USDA Prime, USDA Choice, USDA Select, USDA Standard, USDA Commercial, USDA Utility, USDA Cutter, and USDA Canner. Meat of the lowest three grades is seldom, if ever, sold as retail cuts. Beef from these three grades is ground or goes into processed meat items such as hot dogs. The most popular graded retail beef is USDA Choice. This grade is popular because the meat is very tender, juicy, flavorful, widely available, and can be purchased at a reasonable cost.

Veal has 5 USDA quality grades: Prime, Choice, Good, Standard, and Utility. Graded veal may not be readily available in supermarkets.

Lamb has five quality grades: USDA Prime, USDA Choice, USDA Good, USDA Utility, and USDA Cull. The last three grades are seldom sold as retail cuts. USDA Prime is the most tender, juicy, and flavorful, but the grade most widely sold at retail is USDA Choice. Choice lamb is produced in the greatest volume.

Pork is normally not graded, but the uniformity of the meat is such that grading is not requested.

Knowing what cuts you need, the grades desired, and competitive prices should insure your success as a meat buyer.

See Pamphlet C-1, February 1992 for details on USDA Grades.

Learn to Identify Cuts.

If you are familiar with the meat cuts, you may be able to purchase meat more effectively. That is why several charts are included. Learn to identify meat cuts by their appearance. Though there has been a strong effort nationally to standardize names of meat cuts, names of a given cut may still differ in various parts of the country. Sometimes a cut name may vary from store to store in the same town. Names may indicate the section of the carcass from which the meat was cut. Study the charts for beef and veal, lamb and pork to help learn the cuts.

The part of the carcass from which the meat was cut may also be used as a good guide to the best cooking methods. Meat from the upper middle sections (rib and loin) is the most tender and can be cooked by dry heat methods. Meat from the shoulder (chuck), round (or rump), shank, and plate is less tender and is usually cooked by moist heat methods.

Know Your Dealer.

If you are unfamiliar with the product you are buying, trying to get a good value can be difficult. If you are trying to buy carcasses, sides, or quarters, you may not have the knowledge for purchases. Shopping around may well be the most profitable thing you can do to want to find stores

where you want to do the bulk of your shopping. Try to find a dealer with well-established reputation for honesty and fairness. Check with your friends and neighbors--perhaps call your local Better Business Bureau or Chamber of Commerce if you are not sure.

Most businessmen who sell meat wholesale or retail--carcass, sides, or quarters, are honest and they will often cut meat up for storage when you buy carcass, sides, or quarters. In most cases you will be going to the store, selecting enough meat for the next few meals, and placing it into the refrigerator or freezer, and there will be no thought of dealer honesty.

But you should be aware that there are some dealers who are more interested in making money than giving you proper value and service. A few examples of the bad practices they carry out are:

- placing advertisements that seem to offer "something for nothing"--bargains too good to be true. No dealer will give meat away, and reputable dealers will not pretend to do so.
- offering a "package" deal offering "War" on prices, "Free" meat. Unless the ads specify the USDA grade of the meat and the kind and amount of the various cuts included, do not buy or buy with caution.
- substituting cuts from the forequarter to hindquarter,

- substituting lower grades of meat for higher grades.
- failing to account for the trolly tare when weighing meat sold by hanging weight.

A final example of dishonesty to watch for is called "bait and switch". In this example meat is offered at very low prices and is sometimes advertised as "USDA Choice" or "USDA" Prime. Once lured to the meat establishment, the customer is shown the "advertised" carcass, but it is overfat and wasty.

But hanging alongside the fat carcass is a leaner carcass, and the dealer tries to get you to buy the "leaner" carcass. The dealer tries to convince the customer to buy the leaner carcass, of course, at a higher price.

Chilled or Frozen Storage

Proper chilling and freezing methods will help prevent deterioration of meats. Table 5. Recommended Storage Times and Temperatures for Meats is included to assist you in determining storage times and temperatures for fresh and frozen meats.

Storing Fresh Meats

- Store fresh meats at no more than 40°F. Fresh meats to be held more than a few days should be frozen.
- Wrap fresh meat loosely for generally best results.
 Prepackaged meats to be held more than a day or two should also be loosely wrapped.

Storing Frozen Meats

If you must hold fresh meats longer than a few days, freeze them. The steps that follow will be helpful:

- Trim off fat and remove bones to save freezer space, if desired.
- Divide meat into meal-size or serving size portions.
- Wrap the meat in moisturevapor-proof wrappings, such as coated or laminated freezer papers, polyethylene films or bags, or heavyweight aluminum foil.
- Place two pieces of freezer wrap between each steak or chop to ease separation of the product after freezing.
- Wrap the meat tightly and press out as much air as possible, then:
- Seal the packages well with freezer tape. (Improperly wrapped packages will allow air to enter and draw moisture from the meat, resulting in "freezer burn"

or meat which is dry and less flavorful).

- Label the packages with the name of the cut, date of freezing, and date by which the meat should be used for best eating quality.
- Freeze the meat at 0°F or below.
- Spread the packages of meat to allow the meat to freeze quickly.
- Allow enough space around each package to permit air circulation. You can freeze 2 to 3 pounds of meat for each cubic foot of freezer space at one time.
- Keep beef frozen at 0°F or below to maintain the highest quality.

Retail or Wholesale--Quarters, Sides, or Carcasses

There are three general ways that homeowners may use to buy meat for their freezers: (1) retail, (2) wholesale, (3) quarters, sides, or carcasses. See the respective charts to see the kinds of retail cuts that come from the various wholesale cuts.

Retail Purchases

For normal day to day consumption of meats, consumers shop retail in supermarkets. Retail meats are widely available and advertised, are stocked in large quantities, allow good control of available money, permit large or small purchases, are convenient to use and freeze in the home, offer large varieties, and are generally reasonable in price. "Specials" offer a chance for money savings.

Rewrap retail cuts if bought for long-term freezer storage--and consider the cost of wrapping materials. Also, consider that there may not be enough retail-purchased meat on hand for special occasions.

Wholesale Purchases

If you do have adequate freezer storage, some knowledge of meat cutting, and a desire to save some money-but don't want to cut up or store cuts from a carcass or side--then you may wish to buy a wholesale cut, cut it up, wrap, and freeze it. example, you might buy a beef short loin, from which you will get porterhouse, T-bone, and club steaks, plus some ground beef or stew meat. A whole pork loin, for pork loin roasts and chops; or a leg of lamb, for several leg chops or steaks and a roast.

Purchases of Carcasses, Sides, or Quarters

Buying carcasses, sides, or quarters to cut up for your freezer is a serious undertaking.

First, carcasses may not be available. Before the midsixties, most beef was distributed in carcass form and was easily available for cutting up for the home. But since the mid-1970's, most beef shipped to supermarkets has been centrally cut up into wholesale and retail cuts and delivered to stores in boxes as "boxed" meats.

Second, the cost savings may not significantly justify cutting your meat unless you buy available wholesale cuts and cut them up.

Third, you may not have the expertise nor time to cut up a piece of meat. So, it may be better to stock up on retail cuts purchased while they are on sale.

Should you decide to buy a whole carcass or side (half a carcass, including both fore and hind quarters), you will get a wide variety--the entire range of cuts, both high- and low-priced. These will include some you might not normally buy, such as brisket, short ribs, and shank.

A carcass, side, or quarter is normally sold by its "hanging," or gross weight, the weight before cutting and trimming. (When the meat is weighed, the tare for the trolly should be accounted for.) The amount of usable meat you take home will be considerably less. See Table 1. Retail Value of Beef Purchased In Carcass Form.

The cutting loss (bone, fat trim, shrink, etc.) for a beef carcass could vary from 20 to 30 percent or more. A 25-percent cutting loss, not unusual, means that a 300-pound side of beef would yield 225 pounds of usable meat cuts.

A rule of thumb for carcass beef is: 25 percent waste, 25 percent steaks, and 25 percent roasts. Not all of the steaks and roasts are from the loin and rib, the most tender portions.

Buying a quarter involves many of the considerations already mentioned. In addition, you should be aware of the difference in the kinds of cuts you get from a hindquarter as compared with a forequarter.

A hindquarter of beef will vield more steaks and roasts, but will cost more per pound than a forequarter. A forequarter of beef, while containing the delectable rib roast, has a lower percentage of tender cuts than the hindquarter. The chuck, or shoulder, makes up about onehalf of the forequarter's weight. The yield of usable lean meat, however, is greater in the forequarter than in the hindquarter. See Table 2. Approximate Yields From Wholesale Cuts of Beef (300 Lb. Side, Yield Grade 3) and Table 3. Approximate Yields of Cuts From Beef Quarters (300 Lb. Side, Yield Grade 3).

Table 1. How To Figure Retail Value Of Beef (USDA Choice, YG 3)
Purchased In Carcass Form And Make Comparisons

Yield of Retail Cuts	Carcass % (YG 3)	Pounds	Local Prices per lb.	
Round Steak (includes Tip) Rump Roast (Boneless) Porterhouse, T-Bone,	10.5 3.3		x x	= ===
Club Steaks Sirloin Steaks Rib Roast (7" cut) Blade Chuck Roast Arm Chuck Roast (Boneless) Ground Beef Stew Meat Brisket (Boneless)	5.1 8.3 6.1 8.9 5.8 11.1 10.8 2.1	24.9 18.3 26.7 17.4 33.3 32.4	x	
Flank Steak	.5	.9 :	x x	
Total Retail Cuts Waste (fat, bone, and shrinkage)	72.8		x x	=
TOTAL	100.0	300.0	X TOTAL RETAIL VALUE:	

Note: To make realistic comparisons, it is necessary to know both the quality grade and the yield grade of the carcass. The higher the quality, the more a carcass is worth; likewise, the higher the yield grade, the more it is worth, since it will have a higher yield of lean meat. For illustration, this chart shows the yield from a 300-pound USDA Choice, Yield Grade 3, beef side-a type of carcass widely sold.

EXAMPLE: Buying a 300 pound beef side (USDA Choice, Yield Grade 3) for \$1.00 a pound, hanging weight (and the price includes cutting, wrapping,

and quick freezing).

Cost of carcass purchase: Hanging weight x quoted price=dollars required to buy the side (300 lbs. \times \$1.00=\$300.00). But total usable beef is only 72.8% of the hanging weight. So, 72.8 \times 300 pounds = 218.4 lbs. (usable beef). Therefore, your actual cost per pound for usable beef is \$300.00 - 218.40 lbs.

= \$1.37 per pound.

Cost of retail purchases: To figure a comparable average price for retail cuts of equivalent type and quantity, obtain local prices per pound for the retail cuts listed below. Be sure they are the same quality grade--USDA Choice in this example--and comparable in trim. The figures shown reflect cuts with a maximum of 1/2 inch outside fat and ground beef with about 25% fat. Then multiply each price by the number of pounds shown (second column in the table). Next, total the Retail Value column. This would be your total cost, at retail, for the equivalent of a 300 lb. side of beef. To get the average cost per pound, divide this total by 218.4 pounds (the number of pounds of usable beef you would get from a 300 lb. side). Then you will have a retail price-per-pound to compare with the price per pound you would pay for usable meat in a carcass purchase (\$1.37 in this example).

Table 2.	Approx	imate b	eef	
Yields	from Wh	olesale	Cuts	
(300 대	b. Side,	Yield	Grade	3)

	% of	
	Whlse	
	Cut	Lbs.
Pound (69 lbg)	Cuc	225.
Round (68 lbs.)	20 7	27.0
Round Steak	39.7	
Rump roast (Bnls)	14.6	9.9 12.2
Lean Trim	17.9	12.2
Waste (Fat, bone,		
shrinkage)	27.8	18.9
3 ·		
Total Round	100.0	68.0
1004110414		
m . 1 2 . 7 3		
Trimmed Loin		
(50 lbs.)*		
Porterhouse, T-Bor	ne, Club	o
Steaks	30.6	15.3
Sirloin Steak	49.8	24.9
Lean Trim	6.4	3.2
Waste (Fat, bone		
shrinkage)	12 2	6.6
siii iiikage)	13.2	0.0
metal raim	100 0	
Total Loin *Does not include	100.0	50.0
*Does not include	kidney	knob
and flank		
Rib (27 lbs.)		
Rib Roast (7" cut)	67.8	18.3
Lean Trim	12.6	3.4
Waste (fat, bone,	12.0	3.1
shrinkage)	10 6	5.3
siir iiikage)	19.6	5.3
Total Rib	100.0	27.0
Square Cut Chuck		
(81 lbs.)		
Blade Chuck Roast	33.0	26.7
Arm Chuck Roast	21.5	17.4
(Boneless)	21.3	_
Lean Trim	25.9	21.0
Waste (fat, bone,	25.5	21.0
shrinkage)	19.6	15.9
9.0		
Total Chuck	100.0	81.0

Table 3. Approximate Yields of Cuts from Beef Quarters (300 Lb. Side, Yield Grade 3)

Hindquarter (144 lbs. Round Steak Rump Roast (Bnls) Porterhouse, T-Bone, Club Steaks Sirloin Steaks Flank Steaks Lean Trim	18.8 6.9 10.6 17.3	27.0 9.9 15.3 24.9 1.5
Kidney Waste (Fat, bone, shrinkage Total Hindquarter	. 6	.9
Forequarter (156 Lbs. Rib Roast (7" cut) Blade Chuck Roast Arm Chuck Roast (Bnls	11.7 17.1 3)11.2 4.0 31.6	26.7 17.4 6.3 49.2

Table 4. Yield of Boneless Cooked Meat From Selected Meat Cuts.

Kind and Cut of Meat	Approximate Yield of Cooked Lean From one Pound of Raw Meat
	as Purchased Number of Number of Cups
	3-oz. servings (Chopped or Diced)
Beef Brisket	. 3
Chuck Poacé	
Bone-inBoneless	3 to 3.5
Flank steak, boneless	. 3.5 . 4
Ground Beef	
Bone-inBoneless	. 2.5
Round Steak Bone-in Boneless	. 3.25
Pump Poact	
Bone-in	. 2.5
Sirloin Steak	
Bone-inBoneless	2.5
Veal Breast	
Bone-inBoneless	. 2 1 to 1.5 . 3
Cutlet Bone-in	. 3.5
Boneless Leg Roașt	
Bone-inBonelessLoin Chops, bone-in	. 3.5
I OIR BOOKE	
Bone-in. Boneless	. 3.5
RID ROAST	
Shoulder Roast	. 2.25 1 to 1.5 . 3.5
Bone-inBoneless	. 2.5
Lamb	
Ground lambLeg roașt:	
Bone-inBoneless	3.52
Shoulder Roast	2 1 5
Bone-in Boneless Stew lamb	3 to 3.5
Pork	
Ground pork	
Bone-inBoneless	2.5 to 2.75
Liver	3 . 5
Loin chops, Bone In: Loin roast: Bone-in	
Boneless	2.75 to 31.5 to 1.75
Rib chops, BI	1.75 to 2
Bone-inBoneless	1.75 to 2
Shoulder butt roast (Boston	
Butt) Bonelong	2.5 to 2.75
Boneless	1.25

Table 5. Recommended Storage Times and Temperatures For Meats

Fresh Meats	Storage Times and Temperatures Chilled (days) Frozen (months) (40°F or below) (0°F or below)
Fresh Beef and Veal Chops and Cutlets Ground Beef or Veal Roasts	3 to 5
Beef	
Fresh Lamb Chops and Steaks Ground lamb Roasts Stew lamb	3 to 5
Fresh Pork Chops Roasts Sausage.*	3 to 54 to 63 to 54 to 61 to 2

For your reference, the following charts are included:

BEEF CHART--Wholesale and Retail Cuts

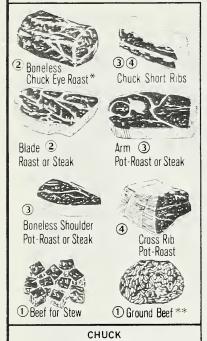
VEAL CHART--Wholesale and Retail Cuts

Lamb Chart--Wholesale and Retail Cuts

Pork Chart--Wholesale and Retail Cuts

BEEF CHART

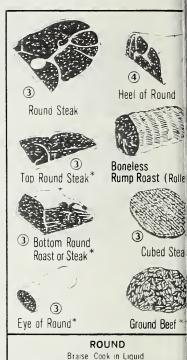
RETAIL CUTS OF BEEF - WHERE THEY COME FROM AND HOW TO COOK THEM

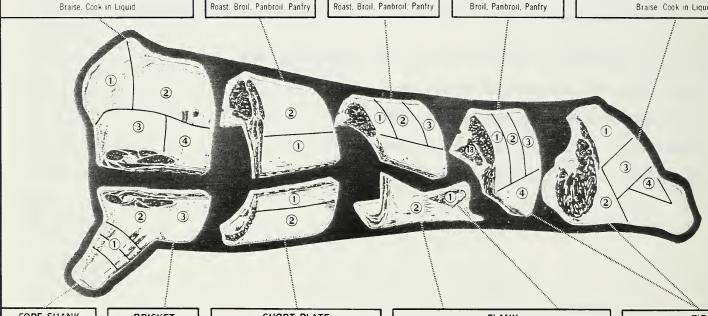






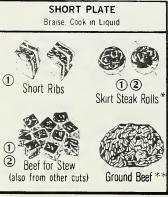


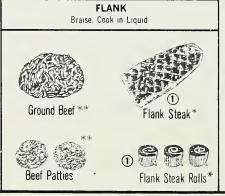












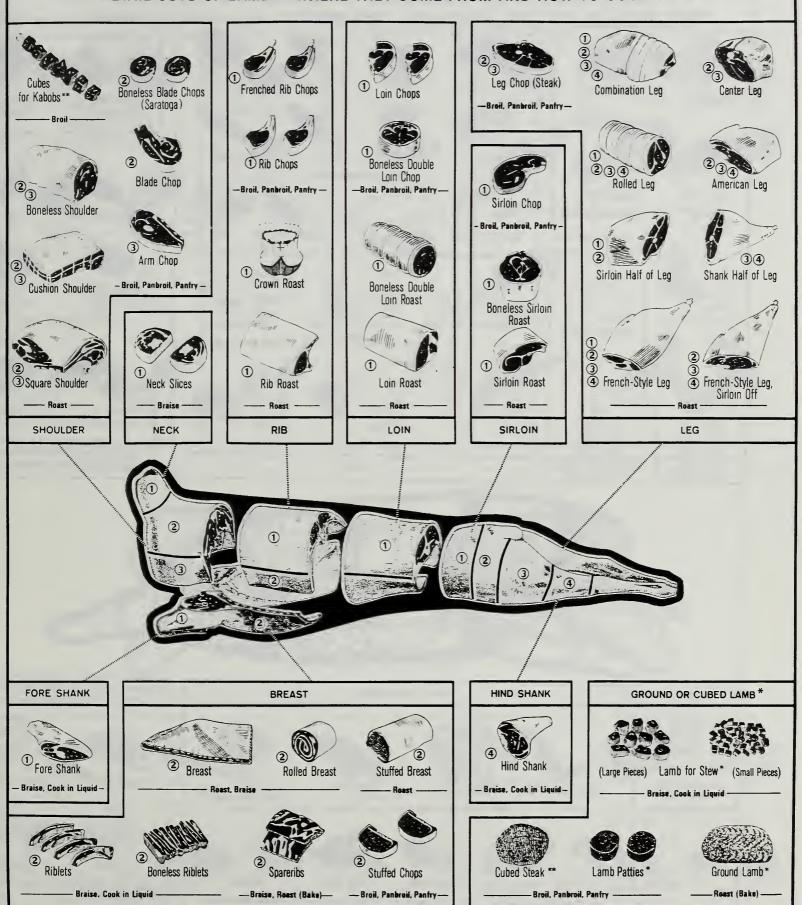


^{&#}x27;May be Roasted, Broiled, Panbroiled or Panfried from high quality beef.

^{&#}x27;May be Roasted. (Baxed). Broiled. Panbroiled or Panfried.

AMB CHART

RETAIL CUTS OF LAMB - WHERE THEY COME FROM AND HOW TO COOK THEM



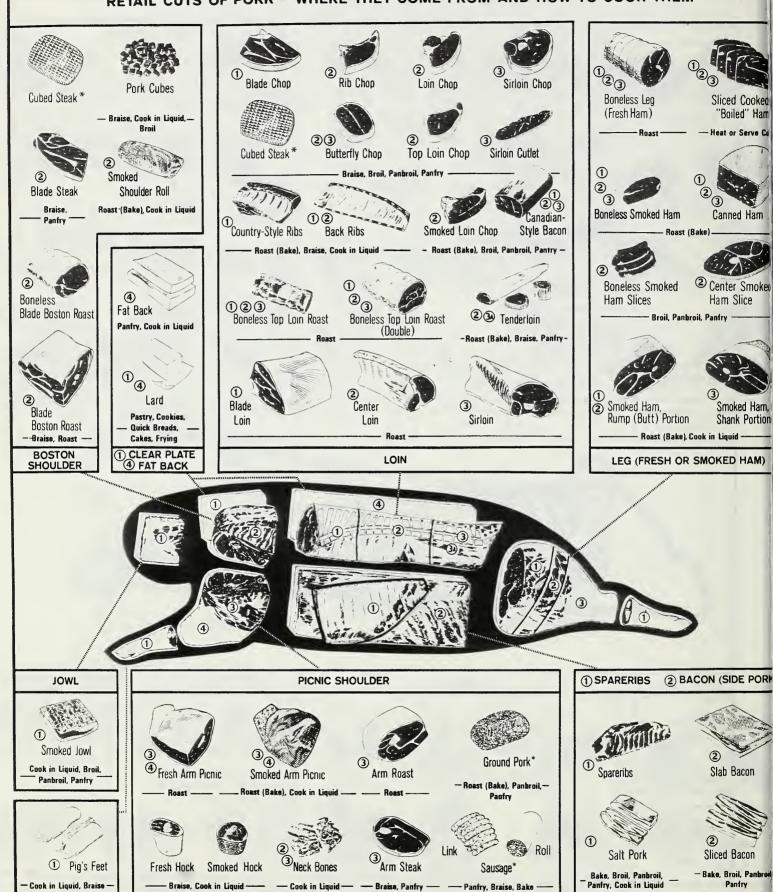
Lamb for stew or grinding may be made from any cut.



^{*}Kabobs or cube steaks may be made from any thick solid piece of boneless Lamb.

PORK CHART

RETAIL CUTS OF PORK - WHERE THEY COME FROM AND HOW TO COOK THEM



VEAL CHART

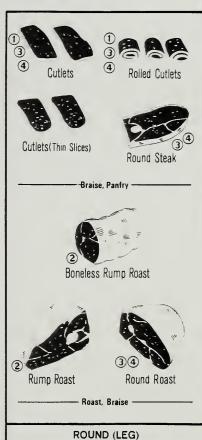
RETAIL CUTS OF VEAL - WHERE THEY COME FROM AND HOW TO COOK THEM

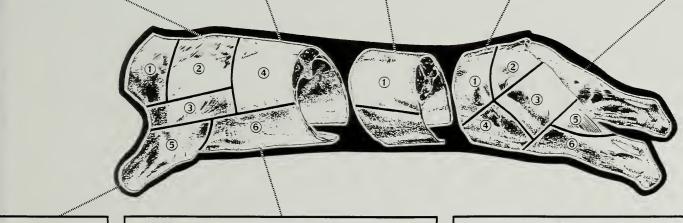




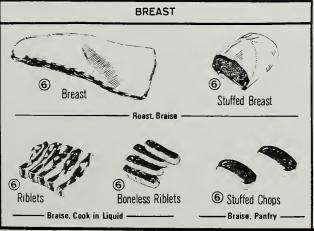


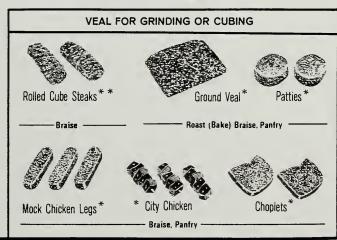


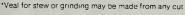


















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